THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) to (d) The Government is considering a proposal to conduct a study on the working of the Food Corporation of India, *inter-alia*, to bring about major improvements in its functioning to control inefficiencies that increase the food subsidy burden. The detailed modalities for the proposed study are being worked out.

Working Groups on Consumer Welfare

1074. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY;
SHRI MOOLCHAND MEENA:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have set up six working groups to look into different areas of consumer welfare;

(b) whether this has been considered by Government after the recommendations of the Central Consumer Protection Council;

(c) if so, the terms of reference of these group;

(d) by when these groups will submit their recommendations to Government; and

(e) to what extent these would help in protecting consumer?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) and (b) In the 23rd meeting of the Central Consumer Protection Council (CCPC) held on 16th July, 2003 at New Delhi, it had been decided to set up Working Groups to study consumer related issues in details and to make suggestions/recommendations to better protect the interest of consumers. The following are the six Working Groups that have been set up:

(i) Working Group on Food Safety.

(ii) Working Group on Drugs, Pharmaceuticals, Medical Devices & Equipments.

(iii) Working Group on Counterfeit, Fake, Spurious, Contraband Products.

(iv) Working Group on Consumer Health & Safety concerning Tobacco & Tobacco Products.

(v) Working Group on Misleading Advertisements.

(vi) Working Group to suggest formulation of new legislations and to suggest proposals to amend the existing legislations relating to consumer protection.

(c) The terms of reference of the six Working Groups are given in The Statement (*See below*).

(d) Due to the nature of the issues being considered by the six Working Groups, no specific time frame have been given to the Working Groups to submit their report/recommendations to the Government. However, it is expected that these Working Groups would take expeditious action to submit their report/recommendations at the earliest.

(e) The subjects on which the Working Groups were set up were identified based on the suggestions made by CCPC members, leading NGOs, voluntary consumer organizations, reports appearing in the media and complaints received in the Department of Consumer Affairs. The report/ recommendations of these Working Group would help the Government to have a more focused approach on critical issues concerning the consumers.

Statement

Working Groups On Consumer Welfare

The Terms of Reference of the six Working Groups are as under:

Working Group on Food Safety

(i) To identify various problems that the consumers face relating to the safety and the quality of various food products produced/ manufactured/imported and made available in the market.

(ii) To suggest preventive as well as remedial measures.

Working Group on Drugs, Pharmaceuticals, Medical Devices & Equipments

(i) To identify various problems that the Consumers face relating to Drugs, Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices/Equipments manufactured and/imported made available in the market.

(ii) To suggest preventive as well as remedial measures to curb the menance of adulterated and spurious drugs and the unsafe/sub-standard medical devices/equipments manufactured/imported and sold in the country.

Working Group on Counterfeit, Fake, Spurious, Contraband Products

(i) To identify various problems that the Consumers face relating to Counterfeit, Fake, Spurious and Contraband products both indigenous and imported, made available in the market.

(ii) To suggest preventive as well as remedial measures to curb the import as well as manufacture and sale of counterfeit, fake, spurious and contraband products in the country.

Working Group on Consumer Health & Safety concerning Tobacco & Tobacco Products

(i) To identify various problems that the Consumers face relating to Health & Safety Concerning Tobacco & Tobacco Products produced and/imported made available in the market.

(ii) To suggest preventive as well as remedial measusres to curb the menace, health & safety aspects concerning tobacco & tobacco products in the country.

Working Group on Misleading Advertisements

(i) To identify various problems that the Consumers face relating to misleading advertisements making tall claims about the products produced/manufactured/imported and made available in the market.

(ii) To suggest preventive as well as remedial measusres.

Working Group to suggest formulation of new legislations and to suggest proposals to amend the existing legislations relating to consumer protection

(i) To identify the needs of the Consumers with regard to various Acts and consider whether those needs can be met by suitable amendments in existing Acts.

(ii) To suggest whether one or more new Acts are required for the above.

(iii) To draft the proposed new Acts; Product Liability Act; Unfair Terms of Contract Act; Builders Licensing Board Act; Whistle Blowers Protection Act and amendments.

(iv) To suggest the concerned administrative Ministry/Dept. who will deal with the proposed new Acts.

(v) To make suggestions for legislations to protect the interest of consumers in other areas by either amending existing Acts or formulations of New Acts.

Making Sugar Industry a Priority Lending sector

1075. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether sugar industry including the sugar co-operative industry of Maharashtra has been pressing a proposal to make the sugar industry eligible for priority sector lending by the commercial banks; and

(b) if so, what decision has since been taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No decision has been taken in this regard.